

NCA  
VOC FOR PGM/FN  
BACKGROUNDER NO. 5-6168  
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INDIA: FAMILY PLANNING

ANNCR:

INDIA'S JANATA GOVERNMENT -- WORRIED BY POOR RESULTS OF ITS BIRTH-CONTROL EFFORTS -- HAS BEEN RESTORING MANY OF THE INCENTIVES FOR FAMILY PLANNING IT ABANDONED A YEAR AGO. CORRESPONDENT FRED BROWN HAS THIS BACKGROUND REPORT FROM NEW DELHI.

VOICE:

ONE OF THE INCENTIVES RESTORED IN WHAT IS NOW CALLED THE FAMILY WELFARE PROGRAM BY THE JANATA GOVERNMENT IS A SYSTEM OF AWARDS GIVEN TO THE STATES FOR ACHIEVEMENTS IN FAMILY PLANNING. INDIA'S FORMER HEALTH MINISTER, RAJ NARAIN, SCRAPPED THE AWARDS LAST YEAR ON GROUNDS THAT PERFORMANCES CITED HAD RESULTED FROM THE COERCIVE METHODS OF THE PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT. THE JANATA GOVERNMENT OWED ITS VICTORY IN THE ELECTIONS OF A YEAR AGO MARCH PARTLY TO RESENTMENT BASED ON ALLEGATIONS OF FORCED STERILIZATION IN THE FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAM.

STATISTICS SHOWED THAT IN THE FIRST YEAR OF JANATA RULE STERILIZATIONS FELL TO ONLY TEN PER CENT OF THE EIGHT MILLION PEOPLE WHO WERE STERILIZED IN THE LAST YEAR OF THE INDIRA GANDHI CONGRESS PARTY RULE. THE NEW GOVERNMENT BLAMES THE POOR SHOWING IN FAMILY PLANNING IN LARGE PART ON CONTINUING REACTION AGAINST THAT PROGRAM. SOME CRITICS OF MISTER NARAIN, WHO WAS DROPPED FROM THE GOVERNMENT RECENTLY, SAY SOME OF THE BLAME SHOULD ALSO REST WITH THE FORMER HEALTH MINISTER AND WITH THE FAILURE OF THE GOVERNMENT TO ADOPT AN UNFQUIVOCAL STAND ON THE ISSUE.

IN REVISING AND EXPANDING THE INCENTIVE AWARDS PROGRAM, THE GOVERNMENT UNDERSCORES THE VOLUNTARY NATURE OF ITS EFFORTS. FOR EXAMPLE, THERE WILL NOW BE TWO AWARDS TO STATES FOR THE BEST

PERFORMANCES IN VOLUNTARY STERILIZATION. THERE WILL ALSO BE SEPARATE AWARDS FOR THE LARGEST NUMBER OF BIRTH-CONTROL DEVICES DISTRIBUTED BY VARIOUS ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS, CORPORATIONS, DEFENSE COMMANDS, AND SO FORTH. AND VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS RUNNING FAMILY HEALTH CENTERS WILL NOW BE ELIGIBLE FOR CASH AWARDS BASED ON PERFORMANCE.

EARLIER, THE GOVERNMENT PUT INTO EFFECT ANOTHER KIND OF INCENTIVE PROGRAM WHEN IT ANNOUNCED THAT HENCEFORTH, ASSISTANCE GRANTS TO THE STATES FROM THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT WILL BE BASED IN PART ON PERFORMANCE IN POPULATION CONTROL. IN A FOLLOW-UP LETTER TO THE ACTION, PRIME MINISTER MORARJI DESAI SAID THE FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAM SHOULD RECEIVE FULL ATTENTION AT ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT. HE SAID IT WAS UP TO THE CHIEF MINISTERS TO SEE THAT THE POPULATION GROWTH DOES NOT ERODE THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC GAINS. NEWSPAPERS HERE RECENTLY GAVE PROMINENCE TO A WORLD BANK PREDICTION THAT IF CURRENT POPULATION TRENDS CONTINUE, INDIA WILL SURPASS CHINA AS THE WORLD'S MOST POPULOUS COUNTRY SOME TIME IN THE NEXT CENTURY.

WJL/RCS